



Most people in U.S. want masks for travelers: AP-NORC poll

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — A majority of people in the United States continue to support a mask requirement for people traveling on airplanes and other shared transportation, a poll finds. A ruling by a federal judge has put the government's transportation mask mandate on hold.

The poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds that despite opposition to that requirement that included verbal abuse and physical violence against flight attendants, 56% of those surveyed favor requiring people on planes, trains and public transportation to wear masks, compared with 24% opposed and 20% who say they are neither in favor nor opposed.

Interviews for the poll were conducted last Thursday to Monday, shortly before a federal judge in Florida struck down the national mask mandate on airplanes and mass transit. Airlines and airports immediately scrapped their requirements that passengers wear face coverings.

Continued on next page



THE COVERUP

Travelers wait in a security line at Love Field in Dallas, Tuesday, April 19, 2022.

Associated Press

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Continued from Front

The Transportation Security Administration stopped enforcing the mask requirement, and the Justice Department announced on Tuesday that it will not appeal the ruling unless the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention determines it's still necessary. The CDC said Wednesday that it continues to recommend that people wear masks in all indoor public transportation settings and was assessing the need for a mask requirement in those settings.

The poll shows a wide partisan divide on the issue. Among Democrats, 80% favor and just 5% oppose the requirement. Among Republicans, 45% are opposed compared with 33% in favor, with 22% saying neither.

Vicki Pettus, who recently moved from Frankfort, Kentucky, to Clearwater, Florida, to be near her grandchildren, said she enjoys the view of Old Tampa Bay but doesn't like the "very lackadaisical attitude" by Gov. Ron DeSantis, a Republican, about masking. She said she will continue to wear her mask to protect against the coronavirus, including around her 55-and-older home community and on the plane when she travels to Kentucky in a few weeks.

"Especially in a plane where that air is recirculating," said Pettus, 71, an independent who leans toward the Democratic Party. "I think people are really dumb not to wear their mask. But, hey, that's their decision, and if they want to get sick that's fine. I'm not going to."



Mass transit riders wear masks as they commute in the financial district of lower Manhattan, Tuesday, April 19, 2022, in New York.

Associated Press

But Kriste Lee, who works in sales in South Florida, can't wait to fly mask-free the next time she travels next month.

"I really wish I was on a plane when they made that announcement," said Lee, 47. "I would have been dancing up and down the aisle."

The continued public support overall for mandating masks on transportation comes even as worries about COVID-19 are among their lowest points of the past two years. Just 20% now say they're very or extremely worried that they or a family member will be infected. That's down slightly since 25% said the same just a month ago and from 36% in December and January as the omicron variant was raging. Another 33% now say they are somewhat worried, while 48% say they're not worried at all.

Count Betty Harp, of Leitchfield, Kentucky, as among the "very worried" and not because she's turning 84 next month. She said she takes care of her large house and yard by herself, does a lot of canning and is in "fantastic health for my age." But she's lost a lot of friends and family to the virus, which has killed nearly 1 million people in the United States.

"I know COVID is still here. It's still around," said Harp, who described herself as a Republican-leaning independent. "I think we should all be wearing masks for a little while longer."

In another AP-NORC poll conducted last month, 44% of those surveyed still said they were often or always wearing face masks outside their homes, though that was down significantly from 65% who said that at the beginning of the year.

The latest poll also shows about half the people favor requiring masks for workers who interact with the public, compared with about 3 in 10 opposed. Support is similar for requiring people at crowded public events such as concerts, sporting events and movies to wear masks.

On these, too, there are significant partisan divides. Seventy-two percent of Democrats favor requiring people attending crowded public events to wear masks, while among Republicans, 25% are in favor and 49% are opposed. The numbers are similar for requiring masks for public-facing workers.

Lee, who said she doesn't "do politics," wondered aloud why people are complaining about the judge's ruling and said nobody is stopping anyone from wearing masks if they

want to.

"We all have our beliefs and obviously different views," said Lee, who is unvaccinated.

"Mine are definitely different from the people who are angry and upset."

Employed people are divided on whether those working in person at their own workplaces should be required to wear masks. Thirty-four percent say they're in favor of that requirement, 33% are opposed and 33% are neither in favor nor opposed.

Among workers who are Democrats, 48% are in favor and 18% are opposed. Among workers who are Republicans, 53% are opposed and 18% are in favor.

Mike Osterholm, director of the University of Minnesota's Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy, said messaging over the mask mandate would have been more effective if it required N95 or KN95 respirators, which are more effective at preventing transmission of the virus.

"But you have actually created a real challenge with yourself with the public who are now being selective if not outright angry about these mandates," said Osterholm, who added that he will continue to wear his N95 mask on planes.

The AP-NORC poll of 1,085 adults was conducted April 14-18 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 3.9 percentage points. □



Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen listens during a House Committee on Financial Services hearing, Wednesday, April 6, 2022, on Capitol Hill in Washington.

Associated Press

Cryptocurrency firms in latest Russian sanctions targets

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. rolled out new sanctions on Wednesday against more than 40 individuals and entities accused of evading the ongoing wave of penalties imposed on Russia as punishment for invading Ukraine.

The sanctions include the first set of penalties against cryptocurrency mining firms in relation to the war. The Treasury Department's

sanctions arm designated the commercial bank Transcapitalbank, which has operations in China and the Middle East. Transcapitalbank is a Russian privately owned commercial bank which the U.S. says has helped sanctioned clients process dollar payments, by providing an alternative communication channel to SWIFT — the dominant system for global finan-

cial transactions. Treasury also targeted people and companies led by U.S.-designated Russian oligarch Konstantin Malofeyev — the founder of a Russian Orthodox news channel, Tsargrad TV. Malofeyev was also designated for sanctions in December 2014. Treasury said he was one of the main sources of financing for Russians promoting separatism in Crimea. □

Pot shop robberies, deaths fuel calls for U.S. banking bill

SEATTLE (AP) — A surge in robberies at licensed cannabis shops — including a pistol-whipping, gunshots and killings in Washington state last month — is helping fuel a renewed push for federal banking reforms that would make the cash-dependent stores a less appealing target.

"It makes absolutely no sense that legal businesses are being forced to operate entirely in cash, and it's dangerous — and sometimes even fatal — for employees behind the register," Washington Sen. Patty Murray, the third-ranking Democrat in the Senate, said in a statement emailed to The Associated Press.

Although 18 states have legalized the recreational use of marijuana, and 37 allow its medical use, it remains illegal under federal law. Because of that, big banks and credit card companies have long been reluctant to work with the industry, leaving the businesses heavily reliant on cash and making them attractive marks for robbers.

On the annual 4/20 marijuana holiday Wednesday, Murray held a news conference at a suburban Seattle cannabis store to say she will prioritize marijuana banking reform as part of her work as a key negotiator on a conference committee that is ironing out differences in House and Senate versions of a major federal competitiveness



A sign warns that firearms are prohibited at Mary Mart, a marijuana store, Tuesday, April 19, 2022, in Tacoma, Wash., as armed security guard Austin MacMath stands watch outside at left.

Associated Press

and innovation bill.

Cannabis industry activists said they consider her announcement an important signal that after years of work, the banking issue might finally get resolved this year, allowing financial institutions to handle marijuana money in states where it is legal without fear of federal prosecution, loss of their federal deposit insurance or other penalties. There recently has been a massive spike in the robberies for reasons that aren't entirely clear. Dozens of cannabis businesses in the San Francisco Bay Area were hit last fall in a wave of attacks that sometimes

appeared coordinated. Industry trackers in Washington state have reported at least 80 so far this year, mostly in the Puget Sound region.

While dispensaries are frequent targets for robberies, the spate in Washington is helping drive the national conversation about banking reform. Last month, a suspect shot and killed an employee at a cannabis store in Tacoma; an ID checker shot and killed a robber in Covington; Seattle police shot and killed a suspect following a robbery in Bellevue; and a robber pistol-whipped a worker at an Everett shop.

In the last few days, police have arrested a 15-year-old boy and a 16-year-old boy in the killing of employee Jordan Brown, 29, at Tacoma's World of Weed. Authorities said the pair were responsible for at least 10 other armed robberies, including several at pot shops.

"The number of these robberies is shocking," said David Postman, the chairman of the Washington Liquor and Cannabis Board.

The board in the past month has held public safety discussions with retailers, recruited law enforcement to talk to retailers about best practices, and worked

with state financial regulators to highlight local banks and credit unions that work with the industry as well as third-party vendors that cannabis retailers can use to conduct cashless phone transactions.

Marijuana shops that can afford it have hired private security guards, sometimes at costs of more than \$50,000 a month for a round-the-clock detail, said Adán Espino, executive director of the Craft Cannabis Coalition, which represents more than 60 retail stores in Washington. Some of the businesses have tried to hire guards, only to find that security companies are completely booked, he said.

Espino said he's pushing for state lawmakers to give tax credits to cannabis stores that have to shell out money for security.

Mary Mart, a cannabis outlet in Tacoma, hired armed security in March after it was robbed twice in two months — including, police say, by the two teens who days later killed Brown. Budtender Amara Barnes, who was not present for either robbery, said she and other employees had their hours cut to help offset the cost.

"It's scary. I had worked here for four years without any kind of incident," Barnes said. "To have a couple kids come in and do that, it really shakes the confidence." □

1 drug company settles ahead of San Francisco opioid trial

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Drugmaker Endo Pharmaceuticals has agreed to pay the city of San Francisco \$10 million over its role in selling prescription opioids in the city.

City Attorney David Chiu announced the settlement Wednesday, five days before a trial is to begin of the city's claims against other companies in the opioid industry.

Chiu said Endo, the maker of the prescription painkiller Percocet, is to pay \$5 million this year and another \$5 million over the next decade, with the money being used to fight the opioid epidemic.

The Malvern, Pennsylvania-based company has agreed to nearly \$300 million worth of settlements of opioid claims with U.S. government entities since 2019, according to an Associated Press tally. One of them, for \$25 million, came just this week with Alabama; that

was announced along with about \$250 million in agreements between the state and other companies.

An Endo spokesperson did not immediately respond to requests for comment from The Associated Press.

The San Francisco trial is scheduled to open in U.S. District Court on Monday with claims involving the drugmakers Allergan and Teva, distribution company Anda and pharmacy chain Walgreens.

Lawyers for the city are expected to delve into the toll on San Francisco. Last year, Mayor London Breed launched an initiative intended to bring down violence and overdoses in the city's Tenderloin and South of Market neighborhoods, where about two people a day were dying from overdoses.

One-fourth of the emergency room visits at

the Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital are opioid-related, Chiu said Wednesday.

The companies will likely contend that the opioids they shipped and sold were prescribed legally. It's among the first wave of federal cases chosen for trial from about 3,000 that were consolidated before a federal judge in Cleveland. Some companies have reached nationwide settlements, but cases involving others are going to trial in courts across the country. Opioid trials are currently being held in state courts in Florida and West Virginia. Closing arguments in a Washington state case scheduled for this month were recently moved to July. And parties are awaiting a judge's ruling in another West Virginia trial held last year.

Overdoses from prescription and illicit opioids have been linked to more than 500,000 deaths in the U.S. in the last two decades. □

Southwest wildfires force evacuations, tighten resources

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) —

An Arizona wildfire nearly tripled in size as relentless winds pushed the flames through neighborhoods on the outskirts of a college and tourist town, keeping hundreds of residents away from their homes and destroying more than two dozen structures.

The blaze continued its run Wednesday through dry grass and scattered Ponderosa pines around homes into volcanic cinder fields, where roots underground can combust and send small rocks flying into the air, fire officials said. Persistent spring winds and 50-mph (80-kph) gusts hindered firefighters.

"This is a heads-up for everywhere else in the state," said fire information officer Dick Fleishman. "If you have dry grass up next to your house, it's time to get that cleaned up."

Fire managers are contending with tight resources as wildfires burn around the Southwest. The U.S. has 16 top-level national fire management teams, and four of those are dedicated to blazes in Arizona and New Mexico — something Fleishman said is rare this early in the wildfire season.



In this photo provided by the Coconino National Forest, the Tunnel Fire burns near Flagstaff, Ariz., on Tuesday, April 19, 2022.

Associated Press

Hundreds of people have been evacuated because of the wildfires north of Flagstaff and south of Prescott in Arizona. In New Mexico, the Mora County Sheriff's Office issued mandatory evacuations for more residents as winds fueled a blaze that has burned more than 14 square miles (36 square kilometers) since Sunday.

Red flag warnings were on tap across New Mexico on

Wednesday and through the rest of the week. Winds were expected to be lighter Wednesday in Arizona but will strengthen Thursday and Friday, said Mark Stubblefield of the National Weather Service.

The number of acres burned in the U.S. so far this year is about 30% above the 10-year average — a figure that has gone up from 20% just earlier this month as the fire danger

shifted from the southern U.S. to the Southwest.

On the outskirts of Flagstaff where tourists and locals revel in hiking and horseback riding trails, camping spots, and the vast expanse of cinder fields for off-road vehicle use, flames soared as high as 100 feet (30 meters). Popular national monuments including Sunset Crater Volcano and Wupatki were closed because of the wildfire.

"It's just a unique community and we're fortunate to live here," said Jon Stoner, who evacuated his home Tuesday. "We feel very lucky with the views we have and the surrounding forest."

Some residents' homes were burned to the ground, though Coconino County hasn't said exactly how many. Officials said Tuesday evening that 766 homes and 1,000 animals had been evacuated, and about 250 structures remained threatened.

One man who reportedly was trapped in his home by the flames was able to get out, Coconino County sheriff's spokesman Jon Paxton said Wednesday.

Firefighters were expected to move through neighborhoods Wednesday to cool down any smoldering spots and assess what's most at risk. Paxton said no injuries or deaths have been reported.

The wildfire's size has surpassed another that burned in the same area in 2010. Resident Kathy Vollmer said her husband stayed behind then, spraying down the house they've lived in since 1999 to protect it. □

Last U.S. stockpile of deadly VX agent destroyed in Kentucky



Jeff Brubaker, site manager at the Blue Grass Chemical Agent Destruction Pilot Plant, points to a cylinder that will be used to move deadly chemical weapons from storage to a new facility where they will be destroyed in Richmond, Ky., Oct. 27, 2015.

Associated Press

By DYLAN LOVAN
Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — The last stockpiles of a deadly chemical agent in the U.S. have been safely eliminated, according to Kentucky

officials in charge of destroying the Cold War-era weapons.

The final M55 rocket containing VX nerve agent was destroyed Tuesday at the Blue Grass Chemical Agent

plant. Officials at the Kentucky plant began disassembling about 18,000 of the rockets and draining the VX agent in July, according to a news release from plant officials.

Candace Coyle, the plant's project manager, said Wednesday the nation's entire stockpile of VX nerve agent "is now completely destroyed."

VX is considered the deadliest of the chemical agents that was produced by the U.S., much of it in the 1960s. It has a consistency similar to motor oil and even a tiny amount causes victims' bodies to flood with fluids, producing a feeling of drowning before death. Officials in 2017 declared that assassins used VX agent to kill the brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in

a Malaysian airport.

The Kentucky Army depot still has 277 tons of other chemical agents left to be destroyed, after beginning with more than 520 tons of VX, GB and mustard agent that was in storage for decades. Officials said it all should be gone by next year after it began eliminating its mustard agent stockpiles in 2019.

"After more than a half century of chemical weapons storage in central Kentucky, the final chapter at Blue Grass Army Depot will soon begin," said Col. Stephen Dorris, commander of the depot in central Kentucky, where the plant is located.

The mustard agent campaign finished in September. The plant also destroyed 4,000 projectiles

with GB nerve agent in the first half of 2020. Another 13,000 155mm projectiles with VX agent were destroyed from January to May 2021.

The military had planned decades ago to destroy the weapons in Kentucky by burning them, but after concerns from residents and environmental groups, a plan was settled on to use water and chemicals to neutralize the agents.

There are also chemical weapons being destroyed at an Army facility in Pueblo, Colorado. The stockpiles at the two sites accounted for the last 10% of an original stockpile of more than 30,000 tons of chemical weapons in the U.S. The Army used incineration methods to destroy the weapons at other sites. □

Judge sends Assange extradition decision to UK government

By JILL LAWLESS

LONDON (AP) — A British judge on Wednesday formally approved the extradition of Julian Assange to the United States to face spying charges. The case will now go to Britain's interior minister for a decision, though the WikiLeaks founder still has legal avenues of appeal.

The order, which brings and end to the years'-long extradition battle closer, comes after the U.K. Supreme Court last month refused Assange permission to appeal against a lower court's ruling that he could be extradited.

District Judge Paul Goldspring issued the order in a brief hearing at Westminster Magistrates' Court, as Assange watched by video link from Belmarsh Prison and his supporters rallied outside the courthouse, demanding he be freed.

Home Secretary Priti Patel will now decide whether to grant the extradition.

The move doesn't exhaust the legal options for Assange, who has sought for years to avoid a trial in the U.S. on charges related to WikiLeaks' publication of a huge trove of classified



Wikileaks founder Julian Assange supporters hold placards as they gather outside Westminster Magistrates court in London, Wednesday, April 20, 2022.

Associated Press

documents more than a decade ago.

His lawyers have four weeks to make submissions to Patel, and can also seek to appeal to the High Court.

Assange lawyer Mark Summers told the court that the legal team had "serious submissions" to make.

The U.S. has asked British authorities to extradite Assange so he can stand trial on 17 charges of espionage

and one charge of computer misuse. American prosecutors say Assange unlawfully helped U.S. Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning steal classified diplomatic cables and military files that WikiLeaks later published, putting lives at risk.

Supporters and lawyers for Assange, 50, argue that he was acting as a journalist and is entitled to First

Amendment protections of freedom of speech for publishing documents that exposed U.S. military wrongdoing in Iraq and Afghanistan. They argue that his case is politically motivated.

A British district court judge had initially rejected a U.S. extradition request on the grounds that Assange was likely to kill himself if held under harsh U.S. prison

conditions. U.S. authorities later provided assurances that the WikiLeaks founder wouldn't face the severe treatment that his lawyers said would put his physical and mental health at risk.

In December, the High Court overturned the lower court's decision, saying that the U.S. promises were enough to guarantee that Assange would be treated humanely. The Supreme Court in March rejected Assange's attempt to challenge that ruling.

Assange's lawyers say he could face up to 175 years in jail if he is convicted in the U.S., though American authorities have said the sentence was likely to be much lower than that. □

Assange has been held at Britain's high-security Belmarsh Prison in London since 2019, when he was arrested for skipping bail during a separate legal battle. Before that, he spent seven years inside the Ecuadorian Embassy in London to avoid extradition to Sweden to face allegations of rape and sexual assault. Sweden dropped the sex crimes investigations in November 2019 because so much time had elapsed. □

Japan formally revokes Russia's 'most favored nation' status

By MARI YAMAGUCHI

Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japan enacted a law on Wednesday formally revoking Russia's "most favored nation" trade status over its invasion of Ukraine, as Tokyo steps up sanctions amid revelations of Russian military atrocities against civilians.

The stripping of Russia's trade status is Japan's latest move against Moscow and is part of a list of sanction measures Prime Minister Fumio Kishida announced last month that also include a decision to expel eight Russian diplomats and trade officials.

The revocation of Russia's trade status by Japan's Parliament, which takes effect later this month, and other sanctions collectively imposed by other countries,

are expected to intensify pressure on Russia, but the moves could also prompt reprisals from Moscow.

The revocation of the trade status applies to tariffs on most imports from Russia, allowing Tokyo to impose higher duties on such products. The measure, however, does not affect imports of crude oil and liquefied natural gas, as well as palladium, a type of rare metal, which had no tariffs before Russia joined the World Trade Organization in 2012 and gained the most favored nation status.

It followed a decision along with the U.S. and other members of the Group of Seven industrialized nations to do so.

Wednesday's parliamentary decision also included a revision of a foreign exchange law to prevent the

transfer of virtual currency held by those subject to asset freezing.

Japan is taking a greater role in the international effort against Russia because of its concerns about the impact of the invasion in East Asia, where China's military has grown increasingly assertive.

Japan has also frozen the assets of hundreds of Russian individuals and groups and banned new investment and trade, including the export of goods that could be used for military purposes. Japan also announced plans to phase out imports of Russian coal. On Wednesday, the eight Russian diplomats and officials subject to expulsion traveled from the Russian Embassy in Tokyo on a bus to the city's Haneda International Airport, where



Lawmakers stand up to approve the revision to a trade law to revoke Moscow's "most favored nation" trade status over its invasion of Ukraine, at the plenary session of the Upper House in Tokyo, Wednesday, April 20, 2022.

Associated Press

they took a Russian government plane home. Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno confirmed the departure of the eight and their families.

Japan has already faced reprisals from Russia. Mos-

cow recently announced the suspension of talks on a peace treaty with Tokyo that included negotiations over Russian-held islands that the former Soviet Union seized from Japan at the end of World War II. □

Report: Hunger kills hundreds of kids in Ethiopia's Tigray

Associated Press

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (AP)

— At least 1,900 children under 5 have died from malnutrition in Ethiopia's embattled Tigray region in the past year, according to a study conducted by regional health officials and seen by The Associated Press.

The deaths were recorded at health facilities across Tigray between June last year and April 1. Western Tigray, which is under the control of forces from the neighboring Amhara region, was not included in the survey.

A doctor involved in the study said the true number of child deaths from malnutrition is likely higher as most families are unable to bring their children to health centers because of transportation challenges. Most hunger deaths go unrecorded, he said.

"Because we cannot access most areas, we do not know what is happening on the community level," said the doctor, who requested anonymity for fear of reprisals. "These are simply the deaths we have managed to record in health facilities."

Tigray has been cut off from the rest of Ethiopia since June when fighters from the



An Ethiopian woman scoops up portions of yellow split peas to be allocated to waiting families after it was distributed by the Relief Society of Tigray in the town of Agula, in the Tigray region of northern Ethiopia, on May 8, 2021.

Associated Press

Tigray People's Liberation Front, or TPLF, recaptured most of the region as federal forces withdrew.

Banking services, phone lines and road links are all down in the region, a situation the United Nations has said amounts to a "de facto blockade."

Ethiopian authorities insist there is no deliberate effort to target Tigrayan civilians. They have urged Tigrayan fighters to surrender.

More than 90% of Tigray's 5.5 million people require humanitarian assistance, including 115,000 children

who are severely malnourished, according to U.N. figures.

Civil servants have not been paid in months. Many have run out of cash to buy food and other goods because banking services have been shut down. The children of families living in urban areas are especially at risk of malnutrition, as their parents don't have farmland to grow food, Tigrayan health officials say. Around 700,000 people in Tigray are in the grip of "famine-like conditions" due to the obstruction of

aid, U.S. officials estimate. Ethiopia's federal government unilaterally declared a surprise "humanitarian truce" on March 24, an announcement it said would allow aid to flow into Tigray. But nearly one month later, only four convoys of around 80 food trucks have entered the region.

"Literally nothing has changed," said an aid worker who recently visited Tigray. "We are just seeing a handful of trucks; these trucks are better than nothing but they are not going to feed the millions of

people who need aid (in Tigray)."

An estimated 2,000 trucks of food must enter Tigray every week to meet the region's needs, a U.N. official said at a meeting in Nairobi, the Kenyan capital, on Wednesday, according to the aid worker, who attended. That's a sharp increase from the previous assessment of 600 a week. The aid worker also spoke on the condition of anonymity for safety concerns. Just 3% of the vegetable seeds and 10% of the fertilizer required for the current planting season have reached Tigray, according to U.N. figures, raising fears of a poor harvest that would deepen the region's hunger crisis.

Some health officials in Tigray say they simply don't have enough supplies to treat many patients they encounter. Some who recently spoke to AP said shortages are so dire that some patients' relatives must personally buy medicines from private pharmacies at inflated prices and bring them to the hospital before their family members can be treated.

Tens of thousands of people have been killed in the war, according to estimates by international aid groups. □

Sweden sees foreign countries playing role in recent riots



Cars are engulfed by flames after protests broke out at Rosengard in Malmo, Sweden, late Sunday, April 17, 2022.

Associated Press

By JAN M. OLSEN

Associated Press

COPENHAGEN, Denmark

(AP) — Sweden's government suspects that actors from abroad incited violent

riots in several Swedish cities last week, according to the country's justice minister.

Crowds threw rocks and burned cars and trash cans

after a Danish far-right provocateur announced plans to hold meetings in Sweden. Rasmus Paludan has burned copies of the Quran at events in Denmark where he also bashes Islam, and the news he wanted to do the same in Sweden sparked anger.

Paludan, who holds dual Danish-Swedish citizenship, "seems for some reason to hate Sweden and try to harm Sweden. I do not understand why" Justice Minister Morgan Johansson said.

In an interview with Swedish newspaper Aftonbladet published Wednesday, Johansson referred to online claims that surfaced earlier this year about Swedish social service agencies al-

legedly kidnapping Muslim children.

"There are many signs that they have been running here as well, campaigning and supporting this in various ways," the minister said. The Foreign Ministry in Stockholm posted a Twitter thread in February devoted to what it termed "a disinformation campaign." A Swedish agency established to counter misinformation said the kidnapping allegations could be traced to an Arabic-language site whose creator expressed support for the Islamic State group.

"We see how the image of Sweden is set by some of these actors in the Middle East," Aftonbladet quoted Johansson as saying. "It is

also addressed by a couple of governments, in Iraq and in Iran."

After word of Paludan's planned stunt reached Iran and the United Arab Emirates, the governments in Tehran and Dubai summoned Swedish diplomats to protest.

A total of 26 police officers and 14 other individuals protesters or other people were injured in the riots, and 20 police vehicles destroyed or damaged, officials have said.

The latest violence broke out Sunday night in Malmo, Sweden's third-largest city, as an angry crowd of mainly young people set fire to fires, debris and garbage cans in a neighborhood known for high crime. □

Cuba: US migration policy 'incoherent' and 'differentiated'

By ANDREA RODRÍGUEZ

HAVANA (AP) — Two days before the opening of migration talks between Cuba and the United States, which have been paralyzed for four years, a high-ranking Cuban official lamented Washington's "incoherent" and "differentiated" migration policies, and exhorted Washington to comply with current agreements.

The migration meeting will take place amid a dramatic increase in arrivals of Cubans at the southern border of the United States. "We are noticing, and now much more these days, that there is a differentiated and incoherent approach by the United States toward the migratory issue," Deputy Foreign Minister Josefina Vidal told a small group of journalists on Tuesday.

The U.S. is financially helping "many countries in the region in order to reactivate their economies, to help them create jobs," including supporting health and education projects, said Vidal. Washington's policy is exactly the opposite with Cuba, where it is applying "maximum pressure to the economic order and through coercive measures."



U.S. flag flies at the U.S. embassy in Havana, Cuba, March 18, 2019 days after the U.S. State Department announced it was eliminating a five-year tourist visa for Cubans.

Associated Press

Cuba's Foreign Ministry said on Twitter that the meeting will be held in Washington Thursday and its delegation will be headed by deputy minister Carlos Fernández de Cossio.

The last of these meetings which according to agreements between both countries must be held twice a year took place in July 2018, under the administration of then President Donald Trump.

Trump ended the policy of rapprochement between both nations that his predecessor, Barack Obama,

had begun.

Trump increased sanctions against the Caribbean island, from the cancellation of permits to send remittances or cruise ships, to penalties for companies from third countries that operate in Cuba, to limitation of flights and punishment of oil tankers bound for Cuba.

These measures and the pandemic contributed to an economic crisis in Cuba, with shortages of basic products, power outages and the respective queues and rationing.

Trump withdrew embassy staff in 2017. Thousands of people were left with incomplete family reunification processes or were prevented from traveling unless they carried out visa procedures through Guyana. U.S. President Joe Biden did not relax the tough measures, despite his campaign promises.

"We do not see any justification for not giving all visas to Cuban emigrants in Havana and forcing the majority of Cubans to travel (to Guyana), with the costs that this implies," added Vi-

dal, who was the head of negotiations for the historic rapprochement with the U.S. in 2014.

The talks concluded with the reopening of diplomatic offices and Obama's trip to the island.

According to U.S. Customs and Border Protection, in the last six months Cubans were stopped 79,800 times at the southern U.S. border, a little more than double that number seen in the entire 2021 fiscal year and five times more than in 2020.

On Tuesday, Vidal presented a gloomy picture. Cuban authorities have said that in the last five years Washington has failed to comply with the part of a bilateral agreement that establishes the delivery of 20,000 visas per year.

Sea crossings have also increased, either in rustic boats or at the hands of traffickers. From October to date, the U.S. Coast Guard intercepted 1,257 Cubans, compared with 838 in 2021. As the figures stand, the number of departures is higher than during the so-called "rafter crisis" of 1994 when some 30,000 people arrived through the Straits of Florida and half of those who did so in the Mariel exodus in 1980, when some 124,000 Cubans left. □

Poland: Coal mine explosions kill 5, injure more than 20

WARSAW, Poland (AP) —

Two methane explosions at a coal mine in southern Poland killed five people and injured more than 20 early Wednesday, the Polish prime minister said. Seven others were missing.

The first blast took place shortly after midnight about 1,000 meters (3,000 feet) under the surface at the Pniówek mine in Pawlowice, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki told reporters outside the mine's office building.

Morawiecki said a rescue operation was launched immediately, but a second explosion occurred about three hours after the first, and communication was lost with some of the rescuers.

The operation was suspended due to the resulting fire and dangerous conditions. Experts were evaluating the possibility of resuming the rescue mission.

The mine, close to the Czech border, is operated by the Jastrzebska Spolka Weglowa, or JSW, mining company. Prosecutors have opened an investigation.

More than 20 people, including rescuers, were hospitalized with severe burns, the prime minister said. Doctors at the Siemianowice Slaskie hospital, which specializes in treating burns and victims of mining accidents, said some of the patients have life-threatening injuries, including burns to their lungs and large ar-

reas of their bodies. Health Minister Adam Niedzielski said that one of the 5 dead had been among the 11 injured who were brought to the Siemianowice hospital in most serious condition. Other injured people were taken to other hospitals in the region.

Rescue workers were among the victims of the explosions, Morawiecki said.

"A tragedy happened here today," he said as he offered sympathy to the families and stressed the dangerous nature of coal mining work.

Poland relies on its own and imported coal for almost 70% of its energy, drawing criticism from the European Union and environmental

organizations concerned about CO2 emissions and climate change.

Most coal mines are located

in the southern Silesia region. Many are at risk of explosions from the sudden release of methane. □



A police car and a firefighters' truck before the Pniówek coal mine in Pawlowice, southern Poland, on Wednesday, April 20, 2022, where two underground methane explosions killed five people and injured more than 20 early Wednesday.

Associated Press

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NOORD— Paseo Herencia offers a variety of shopping, dining and entertainment options in an outdoor center located in the heart of Palm Beach – walking distance from the high-rise hotels.

Shopping

The Paseo Herencia stores offer a great collection in beach wear, clothing, perfume, shoes, jewelry, souvenirs and much more. Pamper yourself by visiting Maggy's and enjoy their salon services and shop



for your favorite beauty products. Aruba Aloe has that perfect gift to bring back home, all made with natural ingredients. Other brand favorites are Tommy Hilfiger, Calvin Klein, Aldo, Carmen Steffens, Nike store, Pandora and many more.

Restaurants

Start with a breakfast meal at Paseo Herencia offering unique breakfast options such as Drunk's Denial with their Make it Your Own Crêpe Bar offering sweet



and savory crêpe flavors and the option to booze it up with their Mimosa crêpe (mandarin soaked in champagne), Pina Colada (pineapples in coconut rum), Bourbon Apple, Brandy Apricot, Whiskey Pear and more. Location can be found by following the bakery smell upon arrival. Another option is Sibarita with their Latin inspired breakfast plates such as Huevos Rancheros, Cafetero Breakfast, Empanadas and more surrounded by a cozy picnic setting. Go Argentinian style at Che Bar and try their delicious omelet with chorizo/ham, mozzarella, onions, peppers, and tomatoes served with skillet potatoes and toast. Looking for a complete breakfast? Visit TGI Fridays and go for the crispy bacon or sausage, eggs your way and fluffy pancakes and toasts for only \$9.99, available all day – every day including unlimited coffee

refills. These restaurants are also open for lunch & dinner offering you a variety of cuisine choices. If you're looking for more unique concepts, join us for dinner at Xixon Restaurant greatly known in Miami for their Spanish inspired dishes with top notch flavors and the largest wine variety or visit The Lazy Turtle and try their exotic African dish "Kuvuta Kuku" accompanied by their tasty lazy cocktails. Coming for drinks? Sip and have a good time at the Bulldog Aruba located in the center of the Plaza. Open till late.

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Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort & Casino Circle of Excellence and Summit Award Winners, 2021

Palm Beach – Hilton Aruba is excited to announce that four key-team members of its Commercial Services team are the proud recipients of the highest commendations awarded by Hilton Worldwide – Circle of Excellence and the Summit Award.

Circle of Excellence represents the pinnacle of sales achievement across Hilton's network. Winners are selected annually based on individual performance against the award criteria and his/her goals. The Commercial Services Summit Awards represent the apex of achievement across Hilton's Commercial Services organization. The winners of this award excel in creating value for customers and are representative of the Hilton's ONE TEAM culture, contributing to the commercial success of the organization as a whole.

Winners include: Jennifer Bolstad, awarded Commercial Director of the Year 2021, Jeanine Gilchrist, Lisa Dammerman, and Margo Esposito, awarded with the Circle of Excellence Individual Sales Excellence award 2021.

Jennifer Bolstad: Commercial Director of the year, 2021

Jennifer outshined all other nominees in the Commercial Director of the Year category and has been driving the commercial strategy of the resort, year after year for the past five

years. Leading the Commercial team, including Sales & Marketing, Revenue, Reservations and Catering departments, Jennifer has played a pivotal role in the successful and speedy recovery of the resort through the highs and lows of demand, post pandemic.

She is a big contributor to the measurable commercial success of the property, deploying innovative solutions, and leading game-changing strategies, to benefit both customers and the organization, while empowering her team, sharing her knowledge, and grooming the next generation of leaders, so they can grow and thrive in their roles. Jennifer re-envisioned executional and operational strategies, post pandemic, that drove efficiency and effectiveness of activities to optimal highs.

Jeanine Gilchrist: Individual Sales Excellence

Jeanine expanded her strategies in 2021, driving and developing the lucrative and important travel agent direct business. She put on the first trip for luxury agents since the pandemic began and agents were elated to be out in the world, experiencing hotels and destinations, once again. With over 20 years of experience, Jeanine is an expert at building personal relationships with a highly demanding clientele, providing personalized, cus-

tomized and caring service to each individual. With excellent follow-up through their reservation booking-journey to the arrival at the resort, she leverages her personal touch and rapport with each travel professional to maximize service, thus building loyalty and trust throughout the customer experience.

As a nominee in the Sales, Catering and Events Criteria, Jeanine outperformed the set goals of annualized booking goals and was evaluated along with her strengths in the areas of her portfolio, such as new account growth, customer relationship skills, and more.

Lisa Dammerman: Individual Sales Excellence

Landing the pinnacle of sales achievement across the Hilton network, Lisa demonstrated her strength as the Hilton's Award Winning Bridal Specialist for 13 years before she was promoted to Resort Experience Manager, in 2022. When it comes to weddings, Lisa is the Queen. Her name and reputation in the wedding market are exceptional, earning her the WeddingWire Couples Choice Award for three consecutive years. Guests inquire about weddings, based on Lisa's reputation, service delivery, and attention to detail.

Lisa shows an extraordinary commitment to helping couples achieve a perfect, highly personal-

ized, wedding day. From a guest's perspective, destination weddings can be very stressful and difficult to manage, but Lisa makes sure worries fade away. She answers every question in detail and has as many conference calls as a bride or groom may need. She provides all possible options to ensure the couple is happy and confident. Despite being miles away, on Aruba, Lisa makes her guests, overseas, feel that she is right at their side to guide them at every step.

As a Circle of Excellence winner, Lisa was selected based on individual performance against the award criteria and her individual goals. She excelled in creating value for resort customers, and elevated her performance, while driving dominant market share, in her respective areas.

Margo Esposito: Individual Sales Excellence

Margo represents the Hilton values while contributing to the commercial success of her resorts. With over 20 years of experience, she pushed strong industry and travel account relations as she consistently stayed on top of Hilton partnerships. Margo is an expert at filling occupancy gaps by activating her account portfolio to deliver volume throughout need-periods, securing key market opportunities.

Margo is in frequent contact with her accounts



and has built long lasting trust and stability by identifying solutions rather than problems, and ensuring the mutual growth of client businesses and her organization. She is a timely communicator both internal and external. The success of Hilton Aruba this year was strongly impacted by Margo's contributions and here ability to activate accounts.

As a nominee in the Sales, Catering and Events General Criteria, Margo also outperformed her annual set goals significantly, and was evaluated for her strengths in relevant areas, similar to Gilchrist.

General Manager Vasco Baselli reports it is an honor to be working with such a decorated team, making up a group of fantastic colleagues, dedicated and determined to do what it takes to work on behalf of One Happy Island, and the Grande Dame of Palm Beach, a bastion of exceptional hospitality. □

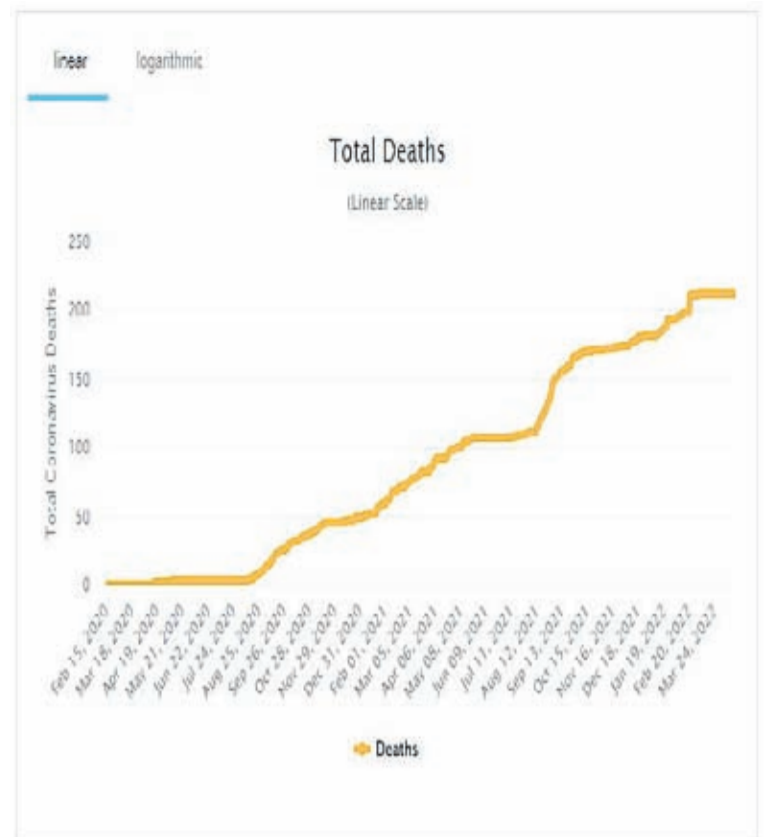
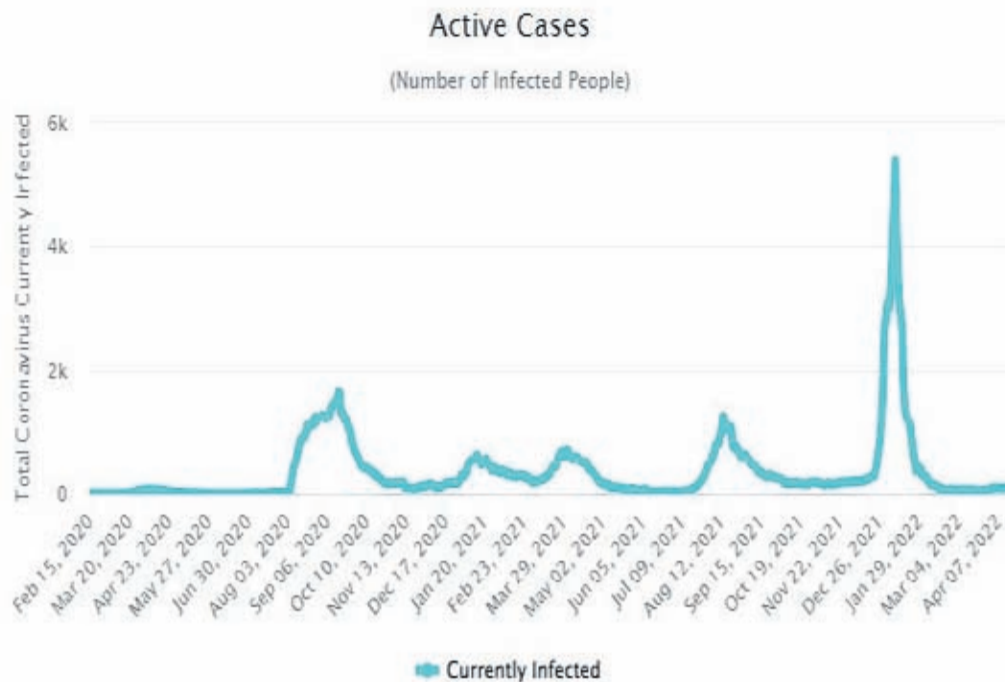
Weekly COVID-19 update shows the recovery of 145 people

ORANJESTAD - The agency for public health of Aruba publishes weekly updates in order to inform our locals and visitors in regards to the development of Covid-19 here on the Island.

According to the information published in this week's report, 145 people who recovered from coronavirus, and a total of 156 new cases were registered. The amount of active cases of COVID-19 on the day of

publishing is of 95 and the amount of death related to or caused by COVID-19 is of 212.

Data illustrates that new cases of COVID-19 have a weekly average of 22 cases



per day, and an average of weekly 'Positivity Rate' of 31 percent per day.

Currently in Aruba there are 3 people hospitalized either with or due to COV-

ID-19, of which none are in ICU, and all 3 in the general floor. In Colombia there are currently 2 people hospitalized, of which 1 is in ICU and another in the general floor. □

Honoring of loyal visitors at Renaissance Ocean Suites

EAGLE BEACH - Recently, Aruba Tourism Authority representative Marouska Heyliger had the great pleasure in honoring many loyal Aruba visitors with their distinctive certificates. These certificates are a

way to say "Masha Danki" for continuously choosing Aruba as a favorite vacation destination. The titles are as following: 10+ years "Distinguished Visitor", 20+ years "Goodwill Ambassador" and 36+ years "Emer-

ald Ambassador".

The honorees are: Scott and Tina Myers from Massachusetts, USA, who have been honored as Goodwill Ambassadors at their home away from home.

This symbolic honorary title is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism, as a token of appreciation to the guests who visit Aruba between the 10-20-35 consecutive year marks.

The couple loves coming to the island for its wonderful people, great weather and safe island.

Heyliger together with the representatives of Renaissance Ocean Suite pre-



sented the certificates to the honorees, handed over some presents and also thanked them for choos-

ing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination and as their home-away-from-home. □

Aruba to Me

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As shares plunge, Netflix takes aim at password sharing

By **MICHAEL LIEDTKE**

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A sharp drop in subscribers sent Netflix shares into freefall Wednesday, forcing the company to consider experimenting with ads and -- hold onto your remote -- cracking down on millions of freeloaders who use passwords shared by friends or family.

Looming changes announced late Tuesday are designed to help Netflix regain momentum lost over the past year. Pandemic-driven lockdowns that drove binge-watching have lifted, while deep-pocketed rivals such as Apple and Walt Disney have begun to chip away at its vast audience with their own streaming services.

Netflix's customer base fell by 200,000 subscribers during the January-March quarter, the first contraction the streaming service has seen since it became available throughout most of the world other than China six years ago. The drop stemmed in part from Netflix's decision to withdraw from Russia to protest the war against Ukraine, resulting in a loss of 700,000 subscribers. Netflix projected a loss of another 2 million subscribers in the current April-June quarter.

The steep erosion, which follows a year of progressively slower growth, has given Netflix investors major jitters. The company's stock was down as much as 37%



This Aug. 13, 2020, photo shows a logo for Netflix on a remote control in Portland, Ore.

Associated Press

midday Wednesday. If the stock closes at this level, the selloff will have wiped out nearly two-thirds of Netflix's market value since the end of last year, erasing \$170 billion in shareholder wealth in less than four months.

The impact on current Netflix customers won't be clear for some time. To David Lewis in Norwalk, Connecticut, it's doesn't seem like a big deal. Lewis shares a premium plan with his three adult children and some of their friends and says they will keep it, even if they have to cut off the friends and each pay for their own accounts.

"We would keep Netflix and

pay for the four in our family, even if it was more," he said. "We love the service and what it offers."

The Los Gatos, California, company estimated that about 100 million households worldwide are watching its service for free by using the account of a friend or another family member, including 30 million in the U.S. and Canada.

"Those are over 100 million households already are choosing to view Netflix," Netflix CEO Reed Hastings said. "We've just got to get paid at some degree for them."

To prod more people to pay for their own accounts, Netflix indicated it will ex-

pand a trial program it has been running in three Latin American countries — Chile, Costa Rica and Peru. In these locations, subscribers can extend service to another household for a discounted price. In Costa Rica, for instance, Netflix plan prices range from \$9 to \$15 a month, but subscribers can openly share their service with another household for \$3.

Netflix offered no additional information about how a cheaper ad-supported service tier would work or how much it would cost. Another rival, Hulu, has long offered an ad-supported tier. While Netflix clearly believes these changes will

help it build upon its current 221.6 million worldwide subscribers, the moves also risk alienating customers to the point they cancel.

Netflix was previously stung by a customer backlash in 2011 when it unveiled plans to begin charging for its then-nascent streaming service, which had been bundled for free with its traditional DVD-by-mail service before its international expansion. In the months after that change, Netflix lost 800,000 subscribers, prompting an apology from Hastings for botching the execution of the spin-off.

Tuesday's announcement was a sobering come-down for a company that was buoyed two years ago when millions of consumers corralled at home were desperately seeking diversions — a void Netflix was happy to fill. Netflix added 36 million subscribers during 2020, by far the largest annual growth since its video streaming service's debut in 2007.

But Hastings now believes those outsized gains may have blinded management. "COVID created a lot of noise on how to read the situation," he said in a video conference Tuesday.

Netflix began heading in a new direction last year when its service added video games at no additional charge in an attempt to give people another reason to subscribe. □

IMF, World Bank chiefs warn of debt squeeze in poor nations

By **PAUL WISEMAN**

AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The heads of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank warned Wednesday that rising interest rates are squeezing the world's poorest countries as they struggle with the coronavirus and soaring food prices.

There is "a huge buildup of debt, especially in the poorest countries," World Bank President David Malpass said in a press conference. "As interest rates rise, the debt pressures are

mounting on developing countries, and we need to move urgently towards solutions."

Malpass said the "debt crisis" is a topic of extensive discussion at this week's Spring meetings of the World Bank and IMF, already dominated by other daunting issues including the war in Ukraine, the coronavirus pandemic and a slowing global economy. IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva told reporters Wednesday that 60% of low-income countries were in or near "debt

distress" — an alarming threshold reached when their debt payments equal half the size of their national economies. Countries that strain to pay their creditors will also struggle to help their poorest citizens at a time when the Ukraine war is disrupting food shipments and pushing food prices higher.

Countries around the world piled on debt to shield their economies from the ravages of the coronavirus pandemic and the lockdowns meant to contain it.

The IMF forecasts that

government debts in low-income countries will surpass 50% of gross domestic product — the broadest measure of economic output — this year, up from less than 44% in the pre-pandemic year 2019.

Globally, the massive economic assistance has worked, fueling an unexpectedly quick recovery from 2020's pandemic recession.

But the rebound caught businesses by surprise. They scrambled to meet surging customer demand, which overwhelmed factories,

ports and freight yards. Deliveries slowed and prices rose.

The IMF now forecasts that consumer prices will jump 8.7% this year in emerging-market and developing countries and 5.7% in advanced economies, most since 1984.

In response, the world's central banks — led by America's Federal Reserve — are raising interest rates to combat rising prices. Higher rates will increase the debt burden — most painfully in the world's poorest countries. □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 44 Rocket parts

1 Cashew family tree

6 Milk buy

11 Naples' nation

12 Korean or Thai

13 Reserved

14 Act the siren

15 Crowd scene players

17 — Mahal

19 That woman

20 Enraged

23 Kind of reactor

25 Rani's gown

26 Disturb the peace, in a way

28 Begged

29 Set straight

30 Green and Gore

31 Big snake

32 Fork over

33 Orchestra clasher

35 "Aladdin" villain

38 Fuming

41 San Antonio mission

42 Dance's de Mille

43 Like fake fruit

DOWN

1 Use

2 Hagen of acting

3 Get people laughing

4 Baseball's Rodriguez

5 Nixon of "Sex and the City"

6 Persian Gulf nation

7 Calls on

8 Target

9 Cardi B's music

10 Booming stuff

16 Place for play

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Yesterday's answer

17 Light-

ning home

18 Even a little

20 Think ahead

21 Sporting site

22 Song

24 Dr.'s field

25 Biol. or geol.

27 Speedy horse

31 "Dark-

ness" poet

33 Arrived

34 Jason's ship

35 Mouth mover

36 Imitating

37 Long-distance

39 Palmer's peg

40 Curvy letter

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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41					42				
43					44				

4-21

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

4-21

CRYPTOQUOTE

RVSU'F UVP KFP EQ S QOLP

VEKFP OQ IEK VSBPL'U XEU S

UETPNSGTP DTSLPU UE DKU OU

EL? — VPLNI JSBOJ UVENPSK

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: THE clearest way into the universe is through a forest wilderness. — JOHN MUIR

Latest apps promise fast service but can they deliver?



A worker sets to make a delivery on a bicycle in front of Gorillas mini-warehouse in the Williamsburg section of the Brooklyn borough of New York on Monday, April 12, 2022.

Associated Press

By TALI ARBEL

AP Technology Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — When Mahlet Berhanemeskel gets back to her New York City home from her 90-minute commute, she doesn't feel like cooking. So instead she orders food like BLTs, Cheez-Its and cookies from an app called Gorillas. It's affordable and takes 10 minutes.

"It's instant gratification," she said.

Gorillas is one of several companies that venture capitalists have poured billions into in the latest pandemic delivery craze: companies that promise to get you a bottle of Tylenol, an iced coffee, hummus, a cucumber or a roll of paper towels in 30 minutes — or even 15 minutes — or less. They typically deliver from mini-warehouses in residential and commercial neighborhoods.

Experts say they are unprofitable. Bigger companies are nonetheless muscling in. And officials in European cities and in New York, which has become the U.S. launching pad, have al-

ready started complaining about how they operate, saying it's bad for employees and residents.

"The problem I see is that quick commerce players, despite the huge valuations enjoyed and the seemingly unstoppable money flow that they get to grow, at some point they will have to find a path to profitability," said Bain partner Marc-Andre Kamel, the co-author of a recent report on the online grocery market.

Services are already shutting down. One, 1520, closed in late December, and two more, Buyk and Fridge No More, shut down in March, apparently having run out of money. Buyk's Russian founders reportedly were not able to provide money due to restrictions put in place during the Ukraine war; it did not respond to questions. Fridge No More, in a tweet, said it was closing after two years "due to growing competition and other industry related issues." Its founder did not answer questions.

Other delivery companies

are having growing pains. Gorillas dropped its "10 minutes" delivery promise from its U.S. marketing — now it's just "in minutes." Gopuff recently laid off 3% of its workforce — more than 400 people.

It's not a sustainable business model, says Len Sherman, an adjunct professor at Columbia University's business school. "There is going to be a lot of consolidation on some very painful terms."

Getir, a Turkish company that operates in Europe as well as Boston, Chicago and New York, said the key to profitability is adding more mini-warehouses in the cities where it delivers.

"We're here for the long term," said Langston Dugger, Getir's head of U.S. operations.

The company recently raised \$768 million, valuing it at close to \$12 billion, and plans to expand in the U.S. Customers range from people "ordering a late night ice cream to somebody who is doing a full grocery shop for the week for a family and everything in between," he said.

Lee Hnetinka, the founder of FastAF, a delivery company with a two-hour delivery model in New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles, said profitability is "just not a priority" right now as it invests in customer experience, saying their strategy is a long-term one and pointing to Amazon's early beginnings when it too was unprofitable.

There are new competitive threats from established restaurant delivery companies DoorDash, Grubhub and Uber and grocery delivery service Instacart that have noticed the appeal of the fast-delivery apps.

DoorDash has three "DashMarts" in New York that promise delivery of groceries and convenience-store items within 15 minutes, and says more locations are coming; it also aims to deliver from Albertsons Cos. grocery stores in more than 20 cities in half an hour. □

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Energy agency: 'Radical ac- tion' need- ed to hit cli- mate goals

BERLIN (AP) — The world must take "radical action" by investing \$5.7 trillion in private and public money each year through 2030 to shift away from fossil fuels and ensure the planetary warming they cause doesn't pass dangerous thresholds, the International Renewable Energy Agency says.

In a 348-page report published Tuesday on the state of the global energy transition, the agency said a massive increase in solar and wind power generation is needed, along with improved energy efficiency, electrification of transport and heating systems, expanded use of hydrogen made with renewables and greater efforts to capture carbon emissions. Scientists say global emissions need to drop 45% by the end of this decade compared to 1990 levels. But recent data show that despite rapid growth in renewable energy, total emissions are going up, not down amid rising energy demand and the expansion of fossil fuel use.

La Camera told an energy conference in Berlin that "not only the 1.5C, the 2C goal is really in danger if we don't act and don't make a dramatic change in the way we produce and consume energy." □

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HTTA

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HTTA

Divi Village
Eagle Beach
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Acc. #23951903
RBC Royal Bank Acc. #1330772

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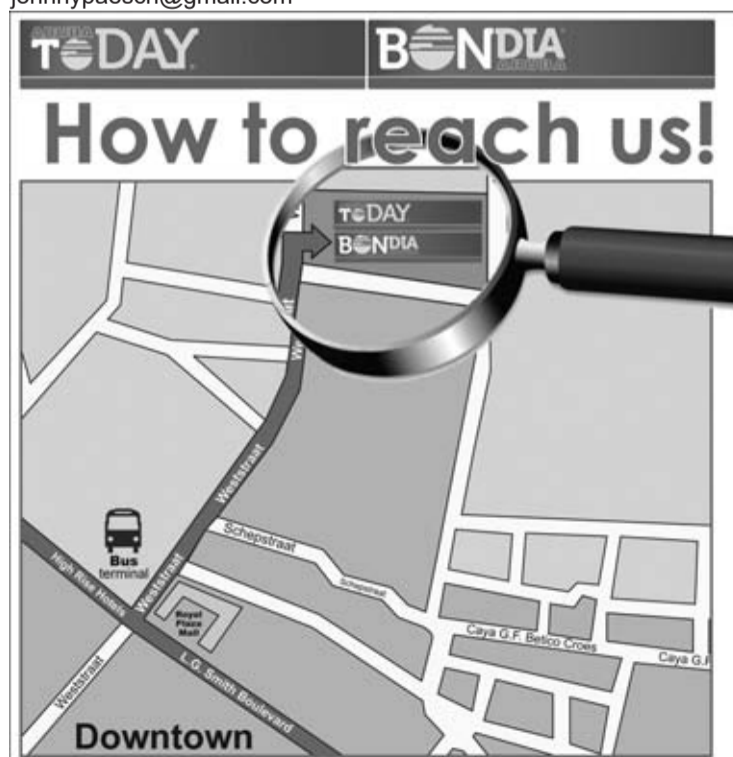
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A Viking epic to conquer them all in 'The Northman'

By **LINDSEY BAHR**
AP Film Writer

Alexander Skarsgård has been dreaming about Vikings for as long as he can remember.

Some of his earliest memories are from Oland, a Swedish island on the Baltic Sea, where his great-grandfather built a home many years ago. His grandfather would regale him with tales of Viking history while walking among the massive runestones.

Skarsgård isn't entirely sure that his grandfather's story about a Viking ancestor named Skar who had a farm on the island a thousand years ago is completely true. But it was the kind of thing that was very exciting to him as a young boy. And it was where the seeds were planted for his latest film, "The Northman," about a self-exiled prince at the dawn of the 10th century. It opens in theaters nationwide Friday.

The Viking dream laid dormant for some time, though. Then around 2017, Skarsgård found himself at a lunch meeting with Robert Eggers, a promising filmmaker who had just burst onto the scene with "The Witch," an eerily realistic depiction of 17th century New England that helped introduce the world to Anya Taylor-Joy. It was one of those "general meetings" that Eggers dreads.

"You usually just sit down with people and talk about nothing and it's usually very awkward," Eggers said.

But it turns out they did have something to talk about. Eggers had recently returned from a trip to Iceland inspired by the grandeur and brutality of the landscapes and armed with classic sagas. By the time they got the check, they'd agreed to make a Viking movie.



This image released by Focus Features shows Alexander Skarsgård in a scene from "The Northman."

"A Viking would definitely say it was fated," Skarsgård said with a smile.

It would send them on their own ambitious quest to create the most historically accurate depiction of Vikings ever.

"In the history of cinema, aside from one tiny Icelandic movie in the late '70s, no one's ever tried to make an authentic Viking movie before," Eggers said. "I had an opening."

The story of "The Northman" is a familiar one. In his research, Eggers stumbled upon the fact that Shakespeare based "Hamlet" on an ancient Nordic folktale about a prince named Amleth, who sees his father murdered by his uncle, flees and returns as an adult to save his mother and avenge his father. It was the perfect jumping off point to have this simple revenge tale that everyone knows that he could then

stuff to the brim with historical details of rituals and weapons and mythology. With Skarsgård playing the grown Amleth, they rounded out the cast with Nicole Kidman as his mother, Queen Gudrún; Ethan Hawke as his father, King Aurvandil; Claes Bang as his murderous uncle, Fjöl-nir; and Björk as a seeress. Working with Icelandic poet Sjórn to write the script, they wrote one part, Olga — an enslaved Slav who becomes a close confidant of Amleth — with Taylor-Joy in mind.

"We both know that if we get stuck in a room with a camera, we're going to end up pushing each other into some weird situations, which is really fun," Taylor-Joy said.

In addition to getting to go to Northern Ireland and Iceland for the shoot, Olga presented a new opportunity to play someone with a

strong tie to a faith.

"You are looking out of your own eyes at whatever situation it is that you're looking at, but you also have an eye above you that's overlooking everything like a bird," she said. "When I think of Vikings, I didn't necessarily think of the poetry of fate and living your life in this spiritual way. It actually gave me a lot of peace... Not everyone starts laughing when someone is about to slit their throat."

She wasn't the only Eggers alum in the bunch. The cast included Willem Dafoe, Kate Dickie and Ralph Ineson, and the crew was largely populated by people from both "The Witch" and "The Lighthouse" including cinematographer Jarin Blaschke, production designer Craig Lathrop and costume designer Linda Muir.

Eggers also recruited a team of Viking historians and archaeologists to help make sure he was doing things right, and, for the first time, he had the funds to do it. They borrowed ships from museums, built some of their own, made weapons by hand and did their best to imagine what the homes would have looked

like. Even the rivets were historically accurate.

Before "The Northman," Eggers' biggest budget was "The Lighthouse's" \$11 million. This time, he had some \$70 million to work with. A bigger budget meant more resources but also more pressure and having to forfeit final cut, although he is quick to say that the film being released is his director's cut.

The shoot itself was a grueling, muddy, seven-month endeavor during the second half of 2020, before COVID-19 vaccines were readily available.

"We really swung for the fences on this one," said Taylor-Joy, who recalled being barefoot in the mud while gale force winds threatened to sweep them off the mountaintop. "While almost everyone was very miserable, I was on cloud nine. I was just having the time of my life. I really enjoy being physically pushed."

Eggers prefers to shoot long takes with only one camera, from seemingly straightforward dialogue scenes to action-heavy set-pieces like a brutal berserker raid. It was enormously taxing on everyone, but they had a shared sense of purpose too.

"We worked on the choreography of it for months before shooting the scene so that we would have the right flow between the camera and the characters moving through the shot," Skarsgård said. "It was challenging but it was also exciting."

What drove him to keep going, he said, was the hope they were making something unique and that audiences would feel immersed in the action in a way that they never would with hundreds of cuts and post-production fixes.

For him, at least, the result was worth the exhaustion and soreness and all the years he spent talking about a film that would take Norse mythology seriously. "It's beyond my imagination, beyond my dreams," Skarsgård said. "I'm incredibly grateful and immensely proud." □



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Bubble Jimmy, or a new version, back at right time for Heat

By TIM REYNOLDS
AP Basketball Writer

MIAMI (AP) — These are Jimmy Butler's three highest-scoring games in a Miami uniform: 40 points against Milwaukee, 40 points against the Los Angeles Lakers, 45 points against Atlanta. And those efforts have quite a bit in common.

He had at least 20 shot attempts and 12 free throws in each of those games. The Heat won all three contests.

And all three happened in the playoffs.

Butler's best Miami moments tend to come when it matters most — the post-season. His 45-point effort against the Hawks on Tuesday night gave top-seeded Miami a 2-0 series lead in their Eastern Conference first-round matchup that resumes on Friday in Atlanta. He said afterward that he simply took what the defense gave him. His teammates and coaches said it was far more impressive than that.

"Jimmy is a max guy, a go-guy, a killer," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said. "However you want to describe it, who cares? He knows how to win. He knows how to help teams win. The game is played on both sides of the floor. It's played with IQ. It's played with toughness. It's played with making plays in those winning moments. It's not necessarily what everybody thinks it is." It wasn't Bubble Jimmy, either. Butler himself shot



Miami Heat forward Jimmy Butler shoots a three-point basket as Atlanta Hawks forward De'Andre Hunter (12) defends during the first half of Game 2 of an NBA basketball first-round playoff series, Tuesday, April 19, 2022, in Miami.

Associated Press

down that comparison.

That moniker comes from when Butler was Miami's best player at the NBA's season-restart bubble at Walt Disney World two years ago, when he carried the Heat on an improbable run to the NBA Finals. He's still Miami's best player, but this is a new version, he insists.

"I'm a different player now than I was then and I'm OK with that," Butler said. "I just always want to play basketball the right way and do whatever it takes to help this team, this organization win. That's why they brought me here."

The previous time a Heat player scored at least 45 points in a game, before

Tuesday, was nearly eight years ago — May 12, 2014, when LeBron James scored a team playoff record 49 for Miami in a win at Brooklyn. The previous time it happened at home was March 3, 2014, when James put on a mask to protect a facial injury and scored a team regular-season record 61 for Miami in a win over Charlotte.

The Heat were the only team since James' big playoff night against the Nets in 2014 that hadn't had a player score 45 points in a game since. Butler changed that, emphatically, while sticking to his credo of just doing "whatever it takes to help this team win."

Butler is unapologetically and manically driven, almost always grating on opponents and sometimes even grating on teammates — people are still talking about the dustup Butler had with Spoelstra and Udonis Haslem during an in-game huddle a month ago. But nights such as Tuesday remind the Heat of the level that Butler can reach at this time of year, when a championship is all that matters.

"I think you have to have that dark side, kind of that demeanor that you need to push other people to be better," Heat point guard Kyle Lowry said. "But you also have to have the talent and work ethic to do it,

right? You can talk about it, but if you're not about it and you don't show it, it's different. He shows it. He shows it when he plays, he shows it when he comes to work. He's always here. He's on time and ready to do his thing and go out there and go to battle."

Butler's statistical averages through the first two games of this playoff run for the top-seeded Heat: 33 points, 5.5 rebounds and 4.5 assists per game, on 60% shooting from the field and — most surprisingly — 56% from the 3-point line, an area that hasn't exactly been a strength of his throughout this season. He's gotten to the foul line more than any three of his Heat teammates have combined in the series, plus has committed only two fouls in 72 minutes of play.

Again, though, he insists that this isn't Bubble Jimmy. "We're a different team and I'm a different player," Butler said. "We're better this way."

There is a work-life balance, even at this time of year for Butler.

After Miami's Game 1 win on Sunday afternoon, Butler talked about getting out of the arena quickly to spend time with his daughter before she went to sleep that night. Then, and only then, would he turn his attention toward Game 2. And in the hours before Game 2, he had his non-basketball habits as well. He listened to the Backstreet Boys. ("I'm a huge fan," Butler said.) □

Suns' Booker has hamstring strain, status vs. Pels uncertain

By DAVID BRANDT
PHOENIX (AP)

Phoenix Suns All-Star guard Devin Booker has a right hamstring strain, clouding his status for the remainder of the team's first-round playoff series against the New Orleans Pelicans.

The Suns said Booker's MRI on Wednesday confirmed a "mild" hamstring strain. Booker was hurt in Tuesday's Game 2 loss during the third quarter when he

tried to defend a New Orleans shot on a fast break. The 25-year-old was sprinting downcourt, jumped and then grabbed at his right hamstring after he landed.

The Pelicans won the game 125-114 to even the series at 1.

Game 3 is on Friday in New Orleans.

The top-seeded Suns are trying to make it back to the NBA Finals after losing

to the Milwaukee Bucks in six games last season. They faced adversity during that run as well: All-Star guard Chris Paul missed time with a shoulder injury and COVID-19 during the playoffs. Booker is the team's leading scorer, averaging nearly 27 points per game during the regular season. He had 31 points — all in the first half — when he left Tuesday's game against the Pelicans with the hamstring injury. □



Phoenix Suns guard Devin Booker (1) drives as New Orleans Pelicans forward Herbert Jones (5) defends during the first half of Game 2 of an NBA basketball first-round playoff series, Tuesday, April 19, 2022, in Phoenix.

Associated Press

Wimbledon bans players from Russia, Belarus over Ukraine war

By CHRIS LEHOURITES

AP Sports Writer

LONDON (AP) — Tennis players from Russia and Belarus will not be allowed to play at Wimbledon this year because of the war in Ukraine, the All England Club announced Wednesday.

Among the prominent men's players affected by the ban are reigning U.S. Open champion Daniil Medvedev, who recently reached No. 1 in the ATP rankings and is currently No. 2, and No. 8 Andrey Rublev. The women's players affected include No. 4 Aryna Sabalenka, who was a Wimbledon semifinalist last year; Victoria Azarenka, a former No. 1 who has won the Australian Open twice; and Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova, the French



Russia's Daniil Medvedev plays a return to Spain's Carlos Alcaraz during the men's singles second round match on day four of the Wimbledon Tennis Championships in London, Thursday July 1, 2021.

Associated Press

Open runner-up last year. Medvedev, Rublev and Pavlyuchenkova are from Russia; Sabalenka and Azarenka are from Belarus.

Wimbledon begins on June 27. The All England Club

confirmed in March that it was having discussions with the British government about whether Russians should be able to play in the grass-court Grand Slam tournament.

"It is our responsibility to play our part in the widespread efforts ... to limit Russia's global influence through the strongest means possible," the All England Club said in a statement first posted on Twitter. "In the circumstances of such unjustified and unprecedented military aggression, it would be unacceptable for the Russian regime to derive any benefits from the involvement of Russian or Belarusian players with The Championships."

Russian athletes have been prevented from competing in many sports following their country's invasion of Ukraine. Belarus has aided Russia in the war.

Soccer, figure skating and track and field all banned Russian and Belarusian athletes and teams from

their events because of the war. The Russian men's national soccer team was excluded from last month's World Cup qualifying play-offs, forcing them to miss a chance to reach this year's tournament in Qatar.

Wednesday's move signals the first time a tennis tournament has told players from Russia and Belarus they are not welcome — and the ATP was quick to criticize the All England Club for what the men's tennis tour called a "unilateral decision" and "unfair." "Our sport is proud to operate on the fundamental principles of merit and fairness, where players compete as individuals to earn their place in tournaments," the ATP said in a statement, adding that the decision "has the potential to set a damaging precedent for the game."

The WTA also said it was "very disappointed" with the decision.

"As the WTA has consistently stated, individual athletes should not be penalized or prevented from competing due to where they are from, or the decisions made by the governments of their countries," the women's tour said in a statement. "The WTA will be evaluating its next steps and what actions may be taken regarding these decisions."

The seven groups that run the sport around the world decided March 1 that players from those countries would be allowed to compete in WTA, ATP and Grand Slam tournaments but not under the name or flag of Russia or Belarus. Those two nations also were kicked out of the Billie Jean King Cup and Davis Cup team competitions; Russia had been the reigning champion in both.

The French Open, which starts on May 22, will be the first Grand Slam tournament held since Russia invaded Ukraine in February and is expected to permit Russian and Belarusian players to compete — just as so-called "neutral" athletes who may not represent their countries. □

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